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ABSTRACT

Symbolic interaction is the foundation for a theory of rhetoric developed in this paper. As manipulators of symbols, humans, unlike all other animals, use abstractions both to indicate (describe things present) and to represent (describe intangible things). Only human beings are capable of the elaborate systems of linguistic reference called symbolic responses. The section headed "An Operational Definition of Meaning" outlines a working theory of signs and a sign model, including a system of evaluation of stimulus importance. "The Mechanisms of Selective Response" describes the emergence of socially imposed responses, which are organized into selector systems, and explains the apperceptive frame of reference and its effects. "The Purpose of Communication" and "A Communication Model" posit the dynamics of the interaction process. Finally, the positivistic and behavioristic components of interpersonal, group, and intercultural communication are described: communicative behavior can be understood best in terms of past and present interaction with an environment. (KS)

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# A POSITIVISTIC AND BEHAVIORISTIC PHILOSOPHY OF RHETORIC BASED UPON SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION

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The foundation for a rhetoric to be laid out in this paper is based upon symbolic interaction. In this rhetoric, we shall view man as a symbol user, a manipulator of symbols. We shall hold that man, unlike all other animals, uses symbols not only to indicate things, but also to represent them. The entire paper will proceed from the fact that only human beings are capable of the fantastically elaborate systems of linguistic reference called symbolic responses.

To begin our construction of a foundation for rhetoric, we need (1) a working theory of signs, (2) a sign model, and (3) an operational definition of meaning.

## I. AN OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF MEANING

The basic principles underlying this discussion are the experimental evidence that all the higher animals invest their behavioral fields with meaning, and that the meaning an animal gives to a situation is what controls his behavior in that situation. This imposes on students of rhetoric the task of investigating the nature of "meaning."

This we propose to do by stating a working theory of signs, and suggesting that these signs generate different levels of reality, from the signalic worlds of the subhuman to the symbolic worlds of man. It is here proposed that these levels of reality are a function of the types of coding media used, from the simple sensory images of the

sub-human to the complex systems of linguistic reference used by man.

To facilitate our analysis we shall present a sign model, and derive therefrom an operational definition of meaning. Our objective is to state the phenomenon of "meaning" as a form of activity that goes on in a biological organism when it is giving meaning to something.

The following discussion of meaning is derived from notes taken in Professor Walter Coutu's seminar on Social Psychology given at Penn State and attended by the author.

## A. A Working Theory of Signs

The term "sign" is here used to refer to any unit of any coding medium or system, the function of which is to relate an organism to some aspect of its environment. It is the function of signs to specify the relationships between an organism and one or more aspects of a particular situation at a particular time and place in a particular context. Since any situation will have numerous aspects, signs seldom, if ever, occur singly; they occur as momentary patterns or processes of some system and for man this is usually language.

It is proposed that there are, in the most general sense, two types of signs, the type being determined by how the sign is used. If the sign is used to indicate the presence of something or to indicate something about

to happen, we call it a signal. Signals are indicators; their function is to call attention to, denote, announce, point to, make the organism aware of, some sensory relation to the situation in which it finds itself. A response coded with a signal or signalic pattern must always occur as a perception--a coded central response to a sensory stimulus relating the organism to some thing or event heard, seen, felt, smelled or tasted at the moment, or within a few seconds. The animal using signs as signals must, at the moment, have sensory contact with the referent of the signal. The animal whose coding media are limited to signals--mainly sensory images--is thus limited to the here and now. The manipulation of signals is probably the highest achievement of the sub-human.

But man uses signs in a manner approaching the incredible. He constantly uses signs as indicators or signals; but he also uses the same signs, not to indicate something but to represent it even when it is perceptually absent or doesn't even exist. Through the instrumentality of linguistically coded central responses, that which is perceptually absent can still operate as a stimulus--"Christmas"--"retirement"--"1776"--"Justice."

When signs are used in this remarkable manner we call them symbols. Both signals and symbols are used as units of coding systems to structure central responses specifying relationships between their referents and the organism

making the response. As Mrs. Langer suggests, what we here call signals enables an animal to "deal with" a referent, whereas what we call symbols enables him to "conceive" of it. Signals are used "to direct our eyes, ears, noses toward things;" symbols "are used to talk about things." Signals are "announcers;" symbols are "reminders," or, as we might say re-minders. Signals are "behavioral tools," symbols are "conceptual tools." With the flick of a symbol man is in the past, present or future; but the ape is here for the duration.

Signs used as symbols may or may not, at a given moment, be induced by a sensory stimulus; they may occur in response to other signs without specific sensory stimuli at the moment, making contemplation possible, and the dreams of man. Since symbols are representers, they can represent "anything"--the real and the unreal--the existent and the nonexistent--the present and the absent--the concrete and the abstract--dogs, gods, justice, beauty.

Whether signs be used for signalic or symbolic purposes, their functional potentialities are dependent upon the type of coding system used. An animal limited to coding systems in the form of sensory images will necessarily live close to physical reality; he will learn and know more directly than the symbol user, who knows reality by the symbols he uses to represent it. The signal user is in bondage to sensory stimuli; the symbol user is at least

momentarily liberated from this bondage, and can enjoy flights of fantasy and creative thinking. The most accomplished sub-human animal seems unable to code his responses in any medium more complex than sensory images, while man has a remarkable variety of media varying in complexity and utility.

## B. A Sign Model

Taking the familiar S-R of psychology, let us modify this by inserting between the two terms a third term (rMs) as an intervening variable.

$$S \longrightarrow rMs \longrightarrow R$$

The middle term is the symbol for a coded central response or process. The left subscript tells us that it is a response to a sensory stimulus (S). The subscript at the right indicates that this response becomes the stimulus for the response (R). The response R is optional, however, for a sign is frequently a stimulus for another sign, as in any conceptual process. (It is here assumed that all of the cognitive processes consist of the manipulation of signs). The symbol M is convenient, for it can be said to symbolize "meaning" or "mental response." While the rMs necessarily looks singular and static, it is intended to represent a rapid dynamic process, or a unit of such a process. The first half of the model ($S \longrightarrow rM$) represents the conventional concept of perception, the assignment of meaning to a sensory stimulus. The second half of the model

(Ms ⟶ R) represents the meaning of a sensory stimulus operating as a stimulus for a particular response. The crucial point to note here is that the human does not react to the original S, but instead reacts to the meaning which he gives to S, i.e. rMs (response - MEANING - stimulus). As an example of the foregoing take the simple utterance, "The enemy crosses the river." In our sign model this is represented by S. But this S as perceived, immediately elicits but a small fraction of its sign-potential--only those signs specifying that some enemy crosses some river. This sign-pattern (utterance) does not specify whose enemy it is, nor the time of crossing (present, past or future) nor even whether the crossing is related to time--it may refer to a habit of crossing the river. There is nothing here to tell us where the crossing takes place, nor the manner of the crossing, nor who the enemy is (bandits, army patrol, disease, a cloud of locusts, tornado, or a band of tourists) nor is the purpose of the crossing specified, nor what river it is.

In common speech we say this utterance has very little meaning and if we are going to get from it a stimulus-pattern for intelligent behavior, we will have to furnish the stimulus-pattern. Depending upon who "we" are, and how we are related to the situational context, we will have to direct at this utterance an elaborate coded central process specifying the name of the enemy, whose enemy it is, why,

when and how the crossing is, was or will be made--or if it is merely a habit.

From the enormous sign-potential of this utterance, let us select enough potential signs to structure at least one possible intelligent stimulus-pattern, signs such as: $rM^1$ , specifying the enemy is a military patrol; $rM^2$ specifying the time is now; $rM^3$ specifying the place is the north bridge; $rM^4$ specifying on foot; $rM^5$ specifying deployed; $rM^{6-12}$ specifying R = sound the alarm, call the corporal of the guard, get help quickly, being the molar response pattern resulting from the anticipated consequences of our complex stimulus-pattern.

But it could have been a farmer who perceived the utterance, and he could have given it the meaning "tornado," or "cloud of locusts," with very different behavioral consequences. The dimensions of meaning are almost infinite.

### C. An Operational Definition

Meaning, then, is what a sign or sign-pattern specifies, and we define "meaning" operationally as the stimulus value of a sign (for a particular person at a particular point in time). "Stimulus value" specifies the behavioral correlate of the sign. The meaning of an object or event is the stimulus value of its sign: M = sv or sign value.

Anything that can be named, "has" (can be given) a large number of meanings. Hence, the total of all possible meanings of a referent under all conditions we shall call

its sign potential. To use language intelligently and precisely is to use only those signs from a referant's total sign-potential that are relevant to the momentary situational context.

A particular coded central process relating an individual to a particular situational context uses, as a sign-pattern, only those units of the referent's sign-potential which the individual selects as relevant to that situation; this resultant sign-pattern we shall call a stimulus-pattern, for that individual in that situation. The meaning of a referent, then, for any individual in any situation, is the particular sign or sign-pattern he uses as a stimulus-pattern. Communication varies directly with the degree of agreement on the stimulus-pattern.

The function of a central process coded with signs is to relate an organism to some aspect of its environment (one or more referents) so that the organism will know how to behave effectively in relation to it. When John Doe directs a coded central process at a referent, the primary function of the process is the control of his own behavior in relation to the referent. It does this by mediating at least two types of stimulus information; it specifies to him (1) what action is to be taken in relation to the referent, and (2) what judgment he is to make about the probable consequences of his action.

The action specified by a stimulus-pattern is both

overt and covert: overt behavior such as what to do about the referent, what to say about it, what to name it; and covert, such as how to relate the referent to the present situation, how to think about it, what to connote or imply, how to perceive, construe, evaluate or refer to it. The judgment specifies the probable consequences of his action, and what to expect and be prepared for. This is our conception of the function of meaning, and it is the key to intelligent behavior.

The use of a sign always has at least two limitations: it is always the act of a particular individual, and it is always a function of a particular situation or set of conditions. Perhaps we can now express this in several verbal equivalencies:

1. What does X mean to you in situation Y?
2. What does X symbolize to you in situation Y?
3. What does X represent to you in situation Y?
4. What does X signify to you in situation Y?
5. What does X indicate to you in situation Y?
6. What does X specify to you in situation Y?
7. What does X tell you to do or think in situation Y?

From what you do about it, others can probably infer your meaning; for what a person does in a specific situation is a function of the signs he uses as stimuli.

For the foundation of our rhetoric, we now possess a theory of signs, a sign model, and an operational definition of meaning. Henceforth, meaning will be taken as the

stimulus value of a sign. This concept becomes extremely important when we consider how man learns from experience, how he develops stereotyped behaviors, adjustment mechanisms, and the like.

## II. THE MECHANISMS OF SELECTIVE RESPONSE

### A. Emergence of Selective Response

The lower animals (phylogenetically) are pre-equipped with stereotyped, pre-fabricated patterns of behavior known as reflex actions. Adult, social man, on the other hand, has few reflexes on the somatic (physiological) level. With man, an adaptive system seems to predominate; he is thrown on his own, but is able to change his ways, to learn from experience.

The human infant at birth is a completely autonomous somatic system. Soon after birth, however, the family begins to transmit to the infant the whole structure of customs, institutions, beliefs, mores, and other devices which serve to regulate our culture; socialization has begun. Toilet training is one of the first leaps from simple somatic control through body needs to personic (symbolic), social control. The original stimulus (S) is transferred and the child begins to function in a symbolic field. The need for adjustment in the case of toilet training is a social, symbolic (rMs), not a biological, need. With such simple acts, a personic system begins to

emerge. The organism becomes conditioned to respond in socially determined ways. The individual learns group-defined ways of acting and feeling, and he learns many of them so fundamentally that they become part of his personality. The process of building values "into" a person is called socialization; the systems which are built we call selector systems.

### B. Selector Systems Comprise an Apperceptive Frame-of-Reference

Any hope, fear, bias, prejudice, interest, habit, philosophy of life, set of values--in short, any need--any tendencies in situations that make one positively or negatively sensitive to any aspect of a situation is a selector or system of selectors. If a person has a strong anti-Black prejudice, this will tend to select his responses in any situation in which Blacks are involved.

This selective function of prejudices, interests, hopes, and the like is what we mean by selector system. Selector systems taken as a whole comprise a person's apperceptive frame-of-reference, that is, the total integration of all the frames-of-reference in terms of which each stimulus is given meaning, interpreted, and validated for action.

Ten categories of group variables structure the apperceptive frame-of-reference (AFR):

1. Language.
2. specialized vocabularies.

3. social customs.
4. social traditions.
5. thought systems.
6. value systems.
7. patterns of living.
8. patterns of organization.
9. status roles.
10. institutions.

C. Effect of the AFR

The AFR is a system of predispositions to act, to think, and to feel in a certain way. It is a system of probable behavior based upon the meanings (rMs) which we are taught to give to situations. A person's AFR envelops him in a coat of mail; operating as a system of selectors it "admits" what is congenial and "screens out" what is not congenial in every situation. Thus meaning given to a situation determines the behavior in the situation. An infant has as much choice concerning what his selectors are going to be as he had in the selection of his parents. Early socialization is semi-permanent, because in a stable society the important situations constantly recur. We all view the world through colored glasses, and so the phrase "as the twig is bent" has profound implications for rhetoric which will be developed in subsequent sections of this paper.

Before these implications are drawn in detail, however, we need two more keystones for our foundation upon which a

rhetoric can be built: a definition of the purpose of communication and a model of communication.

## III. THE PURPOSE OF COMMUNICATION

Most of the traditional definitions of communicative purpose are not behavior-centered, but message-centered. Too often in the past we have looked to the message in order to determine the purpose of a communication. From our present point-of-view, however, we believe it is more useful to define purpose in communication as the goal of a creator or receiver of a message, rather than as the property of the message itself.

As we approach a concept of communicative purpose, let us note, first of all, that we can determine our environment as well as be determined by it. As man matures, one of his basic purposes is to reduce the degree to which he is solely an object of external forces, and increase the degree to which he himself exerts force. Our basic purpose in communication is to become an affective agent; to affect others, our physical and social and cultural environments, and ourselves. We talk and write, we manipulate all sorts of symbols in order to have a vote in what we do and how things are. In short we communicate to influence--to influence with intent. Thus, symbolic communication enables an individual to:

1. exist in a space-time environment.
2. realize the self.

3. formalize the dynamic flux of experience.

4. participate in interpersonal and intercultural relations.

We have said that the purpose of communication is to affect. The question remains, affect whom, and how?

## IV. A COMMUNICATION MODEL

All human communication has some source, some person or group of persons with a purpose for engaging in communication. Given a source, the communicator's purpose is expressed in the form of a message, a systematic set of signs. To translate the source's purposes into a message requires an encoder, which in person-to-person communication would be performed by the cognitive and motor mechanisms of the source. The medium through which the message is transmitted--sound waves, light waves, radio waves, and the like--we shall call the channel of communication.

Thus far, we have specified a communication source, an encoder, a message, and a channel. Yet for communication to occur, there must be somebody at the other end of the channel, the target of communication. We shall call the target the communication receiver. Now, just as the source needs an encoder to translate his purpose into a message, so does the receiver need a decoder to retranslate the message into a usable form. In person-to-person communication, we can view the decoder as the set of cognitive and motor skills of the receiver.

This, then, is our model of the communication process:

1. the communicative source.
2. the encoder.
3. the message.
4. the channel.
5. the decoder.
6. the communicative receiver.

## V. ANCHORING RHETORIC TO A POSITIVISTIC AND BEHAVIORISTIC PHILOSOPHY THAT IS BASED UPON SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION

The basic principles underlying the subsequent discussion of the function of rhetoric are the almost endless evidence that man invests his behavior fields with meaning, and that the meaning a man gives to a situation is what controls his behavior in that situation. This imposes upon students of rhetoric the inescapable task of including such evidence in any discussion of the function of rhetoric.

This we propose to do by suggesting that one of the primary functions of rhetoric is to discover in any given situation the totality of meanings which have been, are, and will be given to that situation, and then responded to, by the intended receivers of a message.

To facilitate our analysis, we shall now integrate all of the ideas set down in previous sections, and from these various ideas attempt to derive a process-description of rhetoric. Our objective is to describe the art of rhetoric as

being, partly at least, a set of operations carried out by a communicative source when he is trying to discover how to affect his receiver in a pre-determined manner.

### A. Man Viewed as a Partly Open System And as a Partly Closed System

First, let us integrate our foundation of rhetoric:

| RHETORIC | |
|---|---|
| A Model of Communication | |
| AFR as a Selector System | Purpose of Communication |
| An Op. Def. Of Meaning | The Apperceptive Frame-of-Reference |
| Working Theory Of Signs | A Sign Model |

The selector systems of the Apperceptive Frame-of-Reference affect everything that a source might want to communicate to a receiver: learning, remembering, perceiving, forgetting, motivation--in short, all of the cognitive processes.

The field theory of Lewin indicates that the field is the momentary, significant environment of the personic system--that to which the system is sensitive, a configuration of influences which "register" all of the relevant factors in a field of force.

The events or influences in the field are a pattern of relationships, which arise from the way people relate

things. The ways of relating are, to a large degree, spelled out and expected by society. The way any individual relates depends upon his conceptual system, and that to which he is sensitive depends upon his selector systems and the configuration of the AFR.

The primary point to be made here is this: the recent findings of psychologists indicate that a man is open to communicative stimuli as much as he is able to be open, and is closed as much as he must be closed. Everything in the universe is a potential human need (rMs). The needs of a person are what his selectors do select in relation to given situations; and the needs of a group are what the group's selectors do select in relation to given situations. One needs what one, through social interaction, has learned to need.

### B. The AFR Determines Both What Can Be Communicated And What Must Be Communicated

The messages in a symbolic, interactional field cannot affect personic behavior until they are given meaning: the person responds to the meaning, rMs, by which he interprets the event. The selector systems enable different men to interpret the same S differently; the rM given to the S, "Black," determines the meaning given by different people to the event; and the rM, in turn determines the Ms that gives rise to the R, if one occurs. People have meanings for themselves, their groups, their cultures; the selector systems of the AFR filter all incoming stimuli in accordance

with their structure. Thus, what a man's selector systems enable him to see constitutes reality for him. As a result, the personic system is as open as it is able to be (consistent with the AFR), and as closed as it must be (to protect the AFR [the person's image of his "world"]).

All men behave in accordance with not only the kind of stimuli they are able to receive, but also the kind they are exposed to. Communication is always the resultant of a configuration of stimuli. This is choice. Hence, in a communication situation, for example, communication will always occur, but what was decoded by the receiver might not be what the source intended. Communication that is consistent with the source's intent, then, will depend upon two things: (1) the kinds of selectors which have been built into the person's action structure, determining the kind of stimuli to which he is open or closed; and (2) the kind of interactional situation arranged by the speaker, determining the kind of stimuli he is exposed to.

## VI. POSITIVISTIC AND BEHAVIORISTIC PERSPECTIVES OF RHETORIC

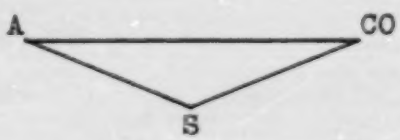
The purpose of this paper has been to demonstrate how we would erect the architetonic of rhetoric upon a foundation of man's most distinguishing characteristic--the ability to symbolize and communicate. We are attempting to generate here a perspective by which an act of communication is viewed in relation to the intended receiver of the message,

his personal and social needs, capacities, and limitations.

We view rhetoric as the art of discovering in any given situation the bonds and barriers to communication which might interfere with, or facilitate, the intent of the source. This is a corollary of our earlier statement that one of the primary functions of rhetoric is to discover in any given situation the totality of meanings which have been, are, and will be given to that situation, and then responded to, by the intended receivers of a message.

A. Barriers to the Source's Intent

Let's begin our discussion of barriers to the source's intent by taking a look at the Communication Triangle (Oliver). The Speaker seeks to arouse in Auditor a new or different Cognitive Organization.

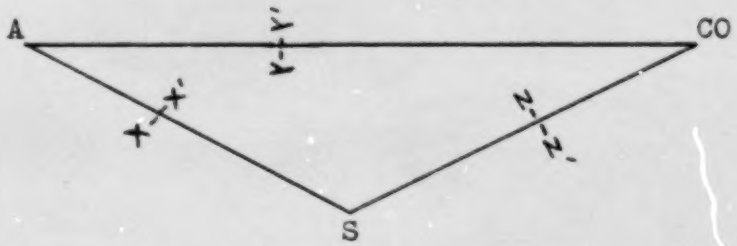



The triangle above depicts communication taking place efficiently and effectively in accordance with the speaker's intent. But, as we have seen, the meanings given to a message by the selector systems of the auditor may erect barriers to the intent of the speaker, viz.:

The Barriers to Communication:

Speaker seeks to arouse in Auditor a new or different Cognitive Organization.

| Barrier X--X' | Barrier Y--Y' | Barrier Z--Z' |
|---|---|---|
| physiological | ignorance | informational |
| linguistic | indifference | analytical |
| phonetic | antagonism | intellectual |
| sociological | incapacity | |
| psychological | | |
| psychiatric | | |
| rhetorical | | |
| logical | | |
| philosophical | | |
| historical | | |
| political | | |
| anthropological | | |
| etc. | | |




In light of the above diagram, barrier x--x' may be interpreted (after Oliver): (1) Clinically--as a stutter or lisp; (2) Linguistically--French to English, etc.; (3) Phonetically--pronunciation; (4) Semantically--word meanings; (5) Sociologically--effects of status or convention; (6) Psychologically--distraction or intelligence bar; (7) Psycho-analytically--inner conflict; (8) Socio-psychologically--emotional or social pressures; (9) Rhetorically--weakness of style, organization, etc.; (10) Logically--

difference in premises; (11) Philosophically--differences in sense of values; (12) Historically--differences in knowledge or experience resulting in differing interpretations; (13) Anthropologically--biological-cultural distances; (14) Politically--organized differences of purpose; (15) Et cetera.

Barrier y--y' may be interpreted as: (1) ignorance (requiring exposition); (2) indifference (requiring interest); (3) antagonism (requiring persuasion); (4) incapacity (requiring limitation of goal); (5) Et cetera.

Barrier z--z' may be interpreted as: informational; analytical; intellectual (distinctions too fine or not fine enough); etcetera.

When viewed from the point-of-view of communicative barriers, the arts of the rhetorician are concerned with how to discover, how to adapt to, or how to eliminate these barriers. Inventio, then, would be concerned with how the selector systems of the AFR will, in a given situation, contribute to the erection of the three types of barriers; e.g. the effects of status in situation; how the auditor's indifference affects the message, or how a speaker's lack of information on the subject affects the auditor.

Under our system dispositio becomes a little less concerned with unity, coherence, and emphasis, and a little more with how a given arrangement might erect barriers at x--x' (linguistic, psychological, etc), at y--y' (a certain

arrangement angering a hostile audience), and at z--z' (how too fine logical distinctions may make an informed audience impatient).

In a like manner, the rhetorician would apply pronuntiatio, elocutio, and memoria to the triangle: he might try to discover, for example, whether certain stylistic turns of language will arouse hostility in certain auditors, if a certain mode of delivery will distract from the information content of the message, etc.

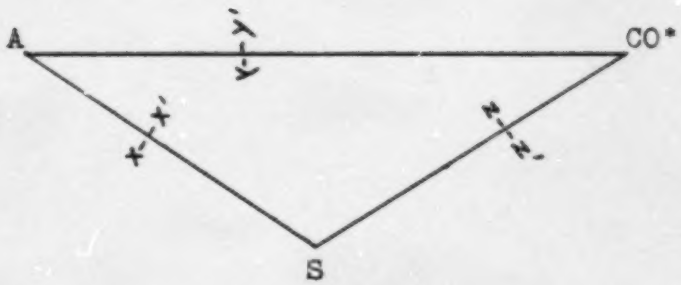
B. Bonds to the Source's Intent

Again, the Speaker tries to Arouse in Auditor a new or different Cognitive Organization. The meanings given to a message by the selector systems of the auditor may create bonds which facilitate the intent of the speaker.

The Bonds of Communication:

Speaker seeks to arouse in Auditor a new or different Cognitive Organization.

| Bond X--X' | Bond Y--Y' | Bond Z--Z' |
|---|---|---|
| physiological | knowledge | informational |
| linguistic | interest | analytical |
| phonetic | enthusiasm | intellectual |
| sociological | intellectual | |
| psychological | capacity | |
| psychiatric | | |
| rhetorical | | |
| logical | | |
| philosophical | | |
| historical | | |
| political | | |
| anthropological | | |




In light of the above diagram, bond x--x' may be interpreted: (1) Clinically--no speech defects which interfere with the message; (2) Linguistically--common language used; (3) Phonetically--no articulation difficulties; (4) Semantically--common vocabulary; (5) Sociologically--common status and roles; (6) Psychologically--no distractions, attention maintained; (7) Psycho-analytically--inner conflicts used to source's advantage; (8) Socio-psychologically--emotional or social pressures used to source's advantage; (9) Rhetorically--strengths of style, organization, etc.; (10) Logically--common premises; (11) Philosophically--common values; (12) Historically--common interpretations resulting from common knowledge or experience; (13) Anthropologically--biological-cultural commonality; (14) Politically--organized unity of purpose; (15) Et cetera.

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*We have been able to fit into the Triangles of Barriers and Bonds the theories of all rhetorics known to us. Whately, for example, is most meaningfully fitted into the X--X' line under rhetorical, logical, and psychological. Blair fits best on the same line under rhetorical, sociological, and phonetic. Campbell covers on the X--X' line more ground than both of these: rhetorical, linguistic, phonetic, sociological, psychological, logical, philosophical, anthropological. The Ramists cover the least ground of all: rhetorical, limited to the ornamental aspects of style and delivery.

Bond y--y' may be interpreted as: (1) knowledge; (2) interest; (3) agreement or good will; (4) intellectual capacity; (5) Et cetera.

Bond z--z' may be interpreted as: informational; analytical; intellectual; et cetera.

When viewed from the point-of-view of communicative bonds, the arts of the rhetorician are concerned with how to discover, how to adapt to, or how to create these bonds. Inventio, then, is concerned with how the selector systems of the AFR relate to the three types of bonds; e.g. the bond of common status; how an auditor's existing interest in a subject might affect the message; how existing agreement or good will affects a message, etc.

Dispositio would be concerned with such questions as how hostility at x--x' or y--y' can be dispelled by an indirect approach to the proposition, whether there are psychological bases for an order of presentation, and the like.

Concerning pronuntiatio, elocutio, and memoria, the rhetorician would try to resolve questions of the extent to which a favorable rMs can be triggered by style, language, etc.

### C. The Interrogational Paradigm

Our understanding of the fact that man invests his behavioral field with meaning, and that the meaning a man gives to a situation is what controls his behavior in that

situation, leads us, finally, to the task of trying to discover what meanings will be attached by an auditor to that fantastically elaborate system of symbols that we call a communication.

One way of looking at the interpersonal communication process is through an adaptation of one of Dr. Oliver's ideas which we call the Interrogational Paradigm:

WHO SAYS WHAT TO WHOM THROUGH WHAT CHANNELS
UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES THROUGH WHAT MEDIA
WITH WHAT EFFECTS?

An application of our understanding of signs, meaning, the AFR, selector systems--all the constituents of our foundation for rhetoric--to the Interrogational Paradigm would yield the total possible rhetorical alternatives of a given communicative situation. The total of all possible rhetorical alternatives of a situation under all relevant conditions we shall call the RHETORICAL POTENTIAL of that situation. The rhetorical potential of interpersonal, group, and cultural communication can be mapped as follows:

1. Interpersonal Communication.

| | |
|---|---|
| Who . . . . . | specified by role. |
| What . . . . . | what speaker intends to communicate; what he does not intend; and what he intends not to communicate. |
| Whom . . . . . | specified by counter-role. |
| Medium . . . . . | sound, light, heat, odor, chemical, etc. |
| Circumstances . . | Continuum: friendly (to intent)-non-friendly. |
| Effects . . . . . | Continuum: desired (intent achieved)-undesired. |

2. Group Communication.

a. Who . . . . . specified by role.
   What . . . . . centrifugal messages ("One to many").
   Whom . . . . . groups; unspecified except by members' segmental roles; e.g. readers, viewers, listeners, theatre patrons, etc.
   Medium . . . . . space--sound and light waves; mass media.
   Circumstances . . unspecified; often a time delay is introduced by mass media.
   Effects . . . . . variable function of interrelation and interaction among who-what-whom-medium circumstances.

b. Who . . . . . groups--unspecified except by members' segmental roles.
   What . . . . . centripetal messages ("many to one").
   Whom . . . . . specified by role; some highly defined such as news analysts.
   Medium . . . . . mass media predominantly; also word of mouth and instrumental action of people.
   Circumstances . . unspecified.
   Effects . . . . . unspecified--variable.

3. Cultural Communication.

a. Who . . . . . group.
   What . . . . . "space binding" messages (linking group with group across space).
   Whom . . . . . counter-groups (often targets).
   Medium . . . . . mass media, laws and regulations, treaties, etc.
   Circumstances . . unspecified.
   Effects . . . . . increased knowledge and inter-cultural understanding, etc.

b. Who . . . . . unspecified groups "older" than recipients of messages.
   What . . . . . "time-binding" messages (linking group with group across time).
   Whom . . . . . unspecified groups "younger" than transmitters of messages.
   Circumstances . . unspecified; most easily described as the process of education-enculturation.

Medium . . . . . artifacts of past; writing of historical figures, folklore, mythology, etc.

Effects . . . . human progress, creation of AFR.*

The foregoing maps are, of course, only crude representations of rhetorical potential. The total of all possible alternatives under all relevant conditions is <u>infinite</u>! In any given context, the meaning that the speaker gives a referent is dependent upon how the selector systems of the auditors indicate that the referent must be treated, used, referred to, or conceptualized, in order to get "through" the AFR without severe distortion. To use rhetoric intelligently and effectively is to discover <u>how</u> to use only those signs from a referent's total sign-potential that are effective (bond-wise and barrier-wise) in the situational context.

An integration of all this for use in rhetoric calls for deep study within a large interdisciplinary framework: Anthropology, Psychoanalysis, Sociology, Social-psychology, Linguistics, Logic, Operations Research, Systems Analysis, Cybernetics, General Semantics, Political Science, Information Theory, Mathematics, and so on, and on, and on!

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*Similar diagrams of interpersonal, group, and cultural communication were given to the author by Kenneth Williams of Ohio University. Prof. Williams received them, I believe, from Robert T. Oliver of Penn State.

In any case, the application of these ideas to the concept of rhetorical potential originated with this paper.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Like good positivists and behaviorists, scions of the stock of Bacon and Campbell and Whately and Winans, we have rejected metaphysics and belle-lettres as the echo and disguise of Sophistry. The trouble with rhetoric has always been that its problems were confused with those of poetic, sometimes logic, often religion. But when we reread Plato and Aristotle, we come away with a feeling that rhetoric did begin with some sense of its political basis and social mission, recognizing that its problems have something to do with people and the way they respond to symbolic communication.

Campbell and others have done their best, but we have not quite emerged from the Middle Ages. Indeed, I have seen the handy-dandy Criticism Profiles for Student Speeches used by some of my colleagues, and invariably four-fifths of such devices is concerned with delivery. The modern era in rhetoric will begin only when the positivist and behaviorist points-of-view are adapted by the entire field. This does <u>not</u> mean that mind is to be reduced to matter and that all introspective insights are to be rejected, but only that communication behavior is to be understood not in mystical terms, but in terms similar to those developed in this paper: those who communicate are organisms with a history in an environment, acting and acted upon, moulding and being moulded. We must study not the number of times an orator took a sip of water during a speech, but modes of response. The problem

of rhetoric is not how to make a "good speech" but how we can come to control the process of symbolic interaction, remake it, and for what goals. There is no knowable limit or end to such a study.